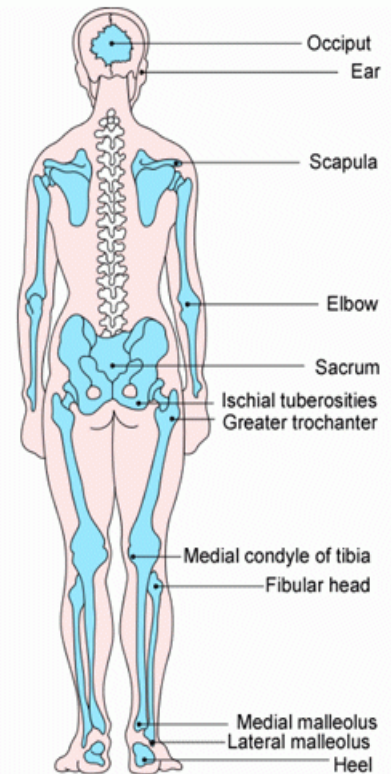


What is Off-Loading?

Off-loading is a term used in wound care to indicate that attempts have been made to reduce pressure from an area of the body. Off-loading is required when there is a wound present or a bony prominence that is causing increased pressure. Off-loading is also required when external forces (like a cast or a brace) are increasing pressure. It is also needed if a patient is bedbound or in a wheelchair. The chair and bed can actually create pressure that builds under pressure points on the body if proper body mechanics and positioning are not maintained.

There are numerous types of off-loading devices that the wound healing center can educate you on. We will be happy to assist you in determining the most appropriate device to achieve the benefits of off-loading.



Different Types of Off-Loading Devices

Below is a list of some of the most commonly used devices the wound center can assist you with.

- Pillows or cushions
- Post-surgical shoes
- 1/2 or 3/4 soled walker shoe
- Splints, casts, and walking boots
- Heel lifts or heel boots
- Wheelchair cushions
- Specialty beds or mattress overlays
- Walkers, canes, or crutches

Different Types of Off-Loading Materials

- Foam
- Gel
- Water
- Air
- Cotton (lining for casts & braces)
- Styrofoam or small glass or plastic beads

Donut-shaped devices should be avoided as these have been proven to increase pressure

PATIENT GUIDE TO OFF-LOADING

How To Off-Load

When using an off-loading program, the first step is to follow the plan. If you have been instructed to wear a special shoe or use a wheelchair, walker, or crutches– use them! It has been theorized that taking one step directly on a wound can increase your healing time up to 4 hours. So if you take 6 steps on an injured foot to your bathroom, you've added a whole day to your healing time.

- When lying on your side in bed, place a pillow between the knees and/or ankles to protect the bony prominences from pressure.
- Keep the head of the bed below a degree angle to decrease the risk of sliding down in bed causing sheer injury
- If you are bed or chair bound and unable to change positions independently, it is imperative that you have a caregiver or family member assist you. For bed bound patients , it is recommended that you change position at a minimum of every two hours. When sitting in a chair, pressure on hips and other bony structures increases nearly 30 times. Shifting your weight every 15 minutes and changing positions every hour will assist in the prevention of breakdown.
- Whether lying in bed or sitting in a chair, it is important to avoid sliding or scraping your skin across surfaces to prevent unnecessary injury. Always use a lifting device or bed sheet to assist with position changes.
- To off-load heels, it is recommended that a pillow be placed lengthwise between knees and ankles. Use 2 pillows if necessary and do not place pillows underneath knees, the objective is to keep heels off the surface of the bed (floating the heels)

When Should I Ask About Off-Loading?

You may benefit from off-loading if you have noticed any of the following signs:

- You have a reddened area that does not go away
- You have a discoloration (bruise-like) or blister caused by pressure that has not begun to heal
- You have a wound that has gotten worse in the last 5 to 7 days

If you have experienced any of these issues, you may want to contact your healthcare provider or you can contact one of ProCare's wound care clinics.